A Dinner Invitation

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A Dinner Invitation

by the_way_i_see_things

Summary

After receiving a special invitation for dinner from Doctor Lecter, Special Agent Will Graham and Alana Bloom decide to accept the offer.
What they don't know is that this dinner won't be like the other ones, it will have a quite unordinary ending, a surprise that Hannibal Lecter was planning for a long time.

Prèparation.

Hannibal closed the door and took a deep breath. The calm smile he had to fake for the last session with a patient vanished in the darkness of the room, in which now he could return feeling like himself: inspired. It was 5.00 pm and there was no time to waste. There was a dinner to prepare, and as he always said, guests can never be disappointed when it's about food, especially not the guests he was expecting that night: Will Graham and Alana Bloom.

Hannibal rushed into the kitchen, wore his Italy-made apron and took out of the shelf two wooden boxes. He opened the first one and and carefully browsed his handwritten recipes. Chicken Liver Pate, Peppercorn Niutton, Parmesan Crumbled Lambs Brains, Briskowsky Burgundy Sauce, Braised Beef Lungs: Yes, the Braised Lungs would have been quite perfect for that evening.

Then he opened the other small box, and took a long look at all those the business cards.

Meryl Nimerfro? No, by the smell her skin had, he could say that she was a smoker, and the lungs he was looking for had to be healthy and fresh.

Christopher World? Hannibal raised his head from the box and tried intensely to focus. If he recalled well, that poor man was one of those stressed employees that are thirty years old but look like they were on their late fifties because of all the worries and problems they have. No, he was looking for someone young, someone healthy.

Doctor Lecter moved the cuff of his silk shirt and looked at his watch. 5.40 pm. Was there still time to go hunting? No, there was no time and this dinner had to be just perfect, mostly because after the Dessert Froid he was planning on something new. Something big.

Darrell Ledgerwood! Yes, young man, jogger, healthy eater; he was the perfect prey for this plate.

After opening the fridge and taking out the still pink-colored lungs, Hannibal removed gently the piece of trachea and couldn't resist to smile: every time he came to the part of the recipe in which he had to cut the flesh, he just couldn't help it. It reminded him of his youth, as he was a junior surgeon, as he discovered his peculiar curiosity towards the human body and found the holding of a scalpel in his right hand extremely pleasant, as if it was a scepter. The soft curvature of the flesh as it came in contact with the blade was like the tuning of the musical instruments before the beginning of the opera, holding a beating heart in his hands made him feel like he was the most powerful man in the whole world, as if he was capable of anything. He closed his eyes, a slight thrill ran through his whole body.

Subsequently he violently stepped on the meat and carefully dusted it with flour. As the lungs came in contact with the warm wine on the pan, the fire underneath burned up in a powerful flame, caused by his quick wrist movement. Hannibal closed briefly his eyes and thought about his guests. Alana Bloom was an interesting person, it's true, but she wasn't comparable to his special guest. There was something about Will Graham, something dark and mysterious that he found interestingly attractive, even if he could't tell exactly what it was.

Maybe it was his peculiar skill that made him a special FBI agent, the ability to deeply empathize with serial killers, a skill that made him day after day so incredibly vulnerable and unstable. Hannibal was a psychiatrist, his job was to understand people and read their minds, yet the more he tried to analyze Will, the less he could get a clear view: all he could see was darkness. Thick and deafening darkness. He just couldn't see him like the other human beings, like a prey to play with.

Will had a monster inside, who was getting more and more powerful, created by the evilness he had to face everyday, and doctor Lecter found it incredibly fascinating. But that night, that night was going to change everything. The move that Hannibal was planning for weeks now, would have revealed Will's true semblance, it would have awakened his monster.

The doorbell rang; Hannibal raised his head from the pan and smiled calmly. It was showtime.

Entrée Chaude.

Chapter Summary

> Will's mental situation is getting worse and worse. Alana struggles, because she doesn't know how to help him. Jack is unsure about Will's future in the FBI.

"Sir, are you okay?"

Will opened his eyes and looked around. Where was he? It looked like a forest, he could hear a waterfall in the distance.

"Sir, how long have you been here?" Will turned to the man and tried to focus on him to understand what he was saying. He could say he was some sort of forest ranger, from the green jacket he was wearing. He looked at his feet: they were covered in mud. He started to shiver, it was so cold.

"Do you know where you are?" Will raised his head and looked at the ranger, intensely. "No.", he said, and slowly glanced down. "We're in Plymouth." "What time is it?", he asked. "It's 6.30 am, sir, what do you remember exactly?" Will closed his eyes and took a deep breath. "My name is Will Graham, it's 6.30 am and I'm in Plymouth, Minnesota."

A dark car slammed on the brakes and stopped on the road side, Jack got out of the car and ran towards the forest ranger showing him his badge. "Jack Crawford, FBI. Where is he?" he asked, almost concerned. The ranger took a brief look at the badge and pointed at Will, who was sitting nearby a tree holding a blanket and gazing into space. Jack made him sit in the backseat and started the car, to turn the heat on. Then he looked at Will from rear-view mirror for a while, trying to figure out what to say. "Will?" "Yes?" "Have you been sleepwalking again?" "What do you say, Jack? Does it look like I came here for a walk?" "Should I be concerned?" Will looked away and tried to relax. "Should I be concerned, Will?", Jack insisted, waiting for a reassuring answer. "No, Jack. You shouldn't."

The phone rang. Will looked at it for a while, as if he just woke up again, and then decided to answer up. "Will? Will are you okay? What happened?" "Alana? No, I mean, yes, everything is okay." "It happened again, didn't it?" "What? No." "Will, please. This job is slowly consuming you. I'm not telling you as a therapist, I'm telling you as a friend. Please, just tell Jack that you're having second thoughts." "Alana, please, stop. I can handle this. This skill that I have, it's saving lives. Of course, it might have some small collateral damages." "Small collateral damages? Is this what you call hallucinating and sleepwalking?" "I have to go, Jack needs me." "We will discuss this again, Will. Seriously. Tonight we're eating at Hannibal's. Okay?" "Okay. Bye."

Jack came closer and closer. Will tried to focus on him, but it was like the world around him was melting. What Alana said was true. He was slowly losing his mind, day after day. And he didn't know what to do. It was like as if there was someone else with him, in that body, and it.. he was trying to take control, slowly. All those murders, those emotions, were consuming him, piece after piece, case after case. The cases! That's what mattered, didn't it? He closed cases. He tried so hard to become an FBI agent, back when he was younger. "He's mentally unstable.", they said. "He can't be in a law enforcement agency if he's mentally unstable." But now, now that Jack Crawford finally noticed him, he became a "special agent", at least this is what they called him. It's like a real agent, only that it's not. Will smiled for a moment. Could he really handle that situation? Could he really control the beasts that were roaring and scratching inside of him?

"Will, we have a new case in Duluth.", Jack said, with a doubtful look. "Okay, let's go.", said Will, smiling at him calmly. This is what he did. Deep inside, he was fighting with the darkness, with all the strength that he had left, but on the outside, on the outside he just tried to smile. All the time. "My name is Will Graham, it's 11 am and I'm on my way to Duluth, Minnesota."

Will closed his eyes. Slowly, one after the other, the policemen and the guys from the forensics disappeared; now it was just him.. and the victim, a woman around the late forties. "I come home from work. I find out that she's cheating on me. I'm mad, so mad I could cut her throat and watch her die, trying to stop the bleeding and slipping in her own blood, I actually do. But it's not enough, no, she needs to pay. So I cut each and every part of her, it doesn't matter if she already passed out, she needs to pay. When I'm done, there's another emotion that's overwhelming me, more than the anger. It's guilt. What did I do? What can I do to repair what I did? There's just one thing: I broke her, now I have to fix her. All I have to do is put the pieces back together and everything will be alright. This is my design." Will smiled and tried to open his eyes, his work was done, but he couldn't: he wasn't alone. It wasn't just the victim and him there, there was someone else. Will could feel his body warming up, more and more, he almost could't breathe. Who are you? What are you doing here? Get out!

"Will?" "Will, what do you see?", Jack asked, trying to wake him up. Will turned at him, with his eyes still closed, and calmly answered: "Darkness.".

"Can you hear me, Will?" "Will!" Will opened his eyes. He was lying on the ground, right there, where he lost control, which meant that he didn't sleepwalk. Jack was shaking him and they were surrounded by paramedics. "The husband did it.", Will said. "What?" "It was the husband.", he said, louder. Jack's look changed. At first it was concerned, almost guilty, because he knew. He knew that Will's mental health was fading, day after day. He knew that he reassured Alana not to let him get to close. After that answer his look was calm, because now he knew that Will was going to be okay, even if it was only temporary. "What time is it, Jack?", Will asked. "It's 3 pm." Jack answered. Will closed his eyes.

"Are you okay, Will?", Alana asked. Will opened his eyes. They were standing in front of Hannibal's house. What happened? How did he get there? "Yes, thank you. Could you please tell me what time it is?" Alana took a long look at him, concerned and answered "Yes, of

course. .. It's 6 pm.", then she rang the bell. After a while Hannibal opened the door, looked at Will and smiled. "Good evening, Will. Alana."

Will closed his eyes. "My name is Will Graham, it's 6 pm and I'm in Baltimore, Maryland."

Plat de Résistance.

Chapter Summary

> Will and Alana enter Hannibal's house. Dinner is served. Will struggles to remain conscious.

"Have you been doing that exercise I suggested you, Will?", asked Hannibal with a calm voice. "Yes, thank you.", answered briefly Will, hoping not to get Alana's attention. She turned. "Which exercise?" Will and Hannibal looked at each other, and then Will glanced down. "Hannibal?", she asked again, now concerned. "During our sessions, I noticed that Will is often distracted, absent. ", doctor Lecter said. "So I heartily recommended him to focus, repeat his name, the hour time and his location." Alana looked at him and smiled. "An exercise to keep his mind on working, with the purpose to avoid the time lapses. Brilliant.", she continued. "Indeed.", he answered, glancing back at her. "So, shall we? Dinner is ready.", Hannibal said, exhibiting the elaborately-set table with an elegant hand gesture.

"Poumons de bœuf braisé avec chicorée; braised beef lungs with Italian salad.", said Hannibal proudly, introducing the plates. Will and Alana contemplated that work of art and then Will observed, amused "Your plates always look more refined introduced in french, don't they?" Alana laughed. "Everything looks more refined in french, Will.", Hannibal responded, smiling at him.

Hannibal tasted the first bite of Darrell Ledgerwood, combining it with a sip of Bordeaux. He closed his eyes and raised his head, to savor one of his best masterpieces. He could feel the flesh in his mouth being violently ripped apart by his sharp teeth on the one hand, and on the other hand it was so soft that it almost melted on this palate. Hannibal opened his eyes and took a long look at his guests, laughing and conversing peacefully. That precise moment was the moment of his dinners in which he could see himself as a God, so powerful. Such majestic creature.

Then he took a closer look at Will. His psychiatrist, doctor Du Maurier, warned him that his allure towards Will Graham could have become an obsession, but Hannibal wasn't remotely concerned about that. His curiosity was overwhelming him one minute after the other. He could feel himself the beast inside of Will growing stronger and stronger, waiting for the right moment to free itself completely. He had so much power, so much potential. And he couldn't see it. He was so blind. Hannibal smiled. But not for long anymore.

He looked at Alana. Poor girl, such a naive soul. How was it possible that she became a psychiatrist? Her observations were far beyond pathetic. Her sexual attraction towards Will was deeply obstructed by her fear of him. Hannibal could see that she was afraid of his sociopathic trace. Such a naive soul. She just could't see the potential hidden underneath those tortoise shelled glasses. Poor girl.

"Are you ready for the Dessert Froid?", Hannibal said, smiling warmly.

Will closed his eyes and took a deep breath. As he opened them again, everything was moving slowly. He turned to Alana, but she wasn't on her seat. He turned to Hannibal, but neither was he. What happened? Where were they? How much time passed? He stood up. He tried to walk, but everything moved so slowly that one step felt like a century. As he placed his left feet on the ground, he could feel that something was not right. Something changed. He lowed his head. Blood. Blood everywhere. Blood on the ground, blood on the walls, blood on the set table. Blood. Will looked at his hands. There was not a single drop on him, which meant he didn't do it. He could feel the sweat on this forehead freezing. He felt alone, abandoned.

"Alana? Hannibal?"

Dessert Froid.

Chapter Summary

Hannibal reveals his true intentions. Will is forced to decide wether he wants to fight or if he wants to abandon himself to his darkest side, the beast.

"Are you ready for the Dessert Froid?", Hannibal said, smiling warmly.

"Thank you, Hannibal. The dinner has been exquisit.", Alana replied, smiling back. He rushed into the kitchen and took the chocolate mousse out of the fridge. He was so impatient that his hands were shaking. Then he came briskly back into the dining room, where his guests were waiting. Will was on his chair, looking quietly at the sunset out of the window, while Alana was contemplating Hannibal's last extension to his painting's collection on the main wall. The doctor placed the desserts down on the table and approached Alana from the back. "You like?", he asked. "It's stunning.", she said, almost lost in the beauty of that work of art. "It's the first draft of '*Wanderer above the Sea of Fog*', by Caspar David Friedrich. An original. It took me a year to find it."

Hannibal took a look at Will, still absorbed in his thoughts, and then looked at the girl again. **Now**. In an instant he took out of his breast pocket the hunting knife he carefully cherished for that occasion, held strongly Alana's lower part of the neck with the left hand and violently cut her jugular vein with the right hand. A thick spurt of dark blood smeared the painting and the white wall. She flinched for a moment and then fell on the ground. A thrill ran through Hannibal's body. He killed so many times before, yet every single time felt like the first one: exciting.

"Will!", she yelled, trying to stop the hemorrhage with her bare hands. "There's no such thing as hope, Alana. It's just an illusion someone invented to keep people from seeing the truth. So stop, please. Let's face it. He's not going to hear you.", Hannibal replied, looking at her intensely. There was a brief moment, right before the fainting of his prey, that he found incredibly amusing: the moment in which they realized their fate. He could see the surprise on their faces, followed by an intense state of fear in their eyes, and afterwards they became.. empty.

Hannibal had to buck up, there was not much time left: Will would have waken up in a while and everything had to be ready. He trailed the body into the kitchen and ripped her dress apart: she wasn't supposed to be just another prey. She had to be The prey. He opened her up with the hunting knife and tried to remove as many organs as possible. It was against his rules as a ripper, but he could bend the rules, just for this once. She was supposed to be the lure, after all.

Will followed the traces of blood into the kitchen. As he raised his head he saw Alana's body lying on the ground. He looked at it for a while, as if he was processing what he was seeing. He felt like he should feel something. Sadness, anger, something. But deep inside, he could't feel a thing. There was just.. darkness. He looked at Hannibal, concentrated on his work, and startled. "What happened?", he asked, as if he didn't want to accept the undeniable. Hannibal raised his head and smirked. "You're awake!", he said, almost rejoicing, "I killed her." Will lowed his head. "Why?" "I did it for you, for your beast. It's time, Will."

He closed his eyes. What was happening? What he feared from weeks, now. What he tried to repress, to choke. It.. he was taking control. And it wasn't just a temporary thing, like when he had the losses of memory. Will would have been right there, right in that body, with him. He knew that. Was there something to fear? Well, wasn't it better that way? No more suffering, no more sadness, no more false hope. He was so tired, and all he could see was darkness; it was surrounding him. It wasn't a threat, it was like a sweet maternal embrace, with a slight trace of bitterness. Was it so bad to just.. let go?

"I can't feel anything, Hannibal. Does this make me a sociopath?"

"Not at all, Will. It makes you a survivor. Just like me."

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